

Potlatch: A Game About Economics

by ndnplayers games

For 2 to 6 players or teams ages 6 and older

Playing Time 15 – 30 minutes

In the box: 8 House Cards, 64 Gifting Cards



The Basics: Your goal is to share your Resource Cards as gifts onto other players' House Cards so that each player's house gets all of their needs met. The gameplay reflects an economic system of sharing resources. The game can end without the goal being met but this incurs a Status loss for every player.

How To Play: Gameplay consists of individual player *turns*; *rounds* that consist of every House Card receiving one Gift; and, *games* that consist of several rounds. In each turn a player must Gift with the fewest amount of resources possible to meet the Obligation level, ideally meeting the House Card needs exactly to receive +1 Status.

If a player must use multiple Resource Cards to meet the Obligation level, they must Gift as few Resource Card *amounts* as possible.

The goal of each game is for every player's House Card to receive enough Gifted resources to meet all of their needs. Each game comes to a Closing Action when one player's house has been gifted enough to meet all its needs, or if no player has Resource Cards that are playable on unmet house needs.

1. The first player Gifts another player by putting one Resource Card from their hand to another player into the area outside the house. They can play any amount (1 to 4) of any type of Resource.

2. The player who receives the first Gift plays next. They play one or more Resource Card(s) equal to or greater than the amount of the first player's Gift to meet the Obligation level set by the first player's Gift.

If multiple Resource Cards are needed to add up to the Obligation level of the first player's Gift, these can be the same or different types of Resource Cards. When a Resource Card(s) is played with a higher Obligation level than the previous player's, then the higher number becomes the new Obligation level for the round.

If it is your turn but you cannot play because the Resource Cards in your hand do not match any of the *amount* and/or

type of unmet needs of other players' House Cards, then invoke the Combine Resources action.

3. The player who received the second Gift plays next. They must Gift one player's House Card that has not received any Gifted Resource Card(s) in this round with one or more Resource Card(s) that meets the Obligation level set by the second player's Gift.

4. Play continues with the gifted player taking the next turn until (1) every player's House Card has been Gifted at least once, or (2) a player does not have playable Resource Cards when it is their turn even after invoking the Combine Resources action. If (1), then the round ends and each player's Gifts get moved inside the house into the storage area. Each player draws from the stack of Resource Cards in the middle of the play area until they have 6 Resource Cards in their hand. The Obligation level is reset to 1. If (2), then the game comes to the Closing Action.

5. All subsequent rounds begin with the last player who was Gifted in the previous round. They Gift any player's House Card that has unmet needs. To determine a House Card's unmet needs, add together the *amount* of all the Gifted Resource Cards in both the inside storage area and the outside Gifting area. The play continues as in the first round.

6. The game comes to the Closing Action when (1) one player has all their house needs met, or (2) no player has the correct type and size of Resource Card to Gift another at the current Obligation level, even after initiating a Combine Resources action. After completing the Closing Action the game ends.

Cards: Resource Cards have red borders on the back and are used for Gifting other players' houses. Every card has colored circles in their corners with numbers inside. The color indicates the *type* of gift or need and the number indicates the *amount* of gift or need.



Red circles are Food or Life-Giving medicine. Note the "FLG" in the white crescents on the ends of the cards.



Green circles are Gathered Materials (GM) that are made into useful items.

Crafted Technology (CT) items are made from gathered materials and have yellow circles.



Blue circles are used for types of Teachings (T) needed to maintain a thriving society.



House Cards have brown borders on the back and represent human bighouses that need resources for everyone in their community to survive over time. House Cards, like the bighouses they represent, come in various sizes. Each size has different amounts of needs. The number and color in the corners reflects the size of the house and the total amount of each type of resource it needs. Bighouse sizes can be thought of as having several small cooking fires with each hearth used by a smaller family grouping living inside the bighouse along with other smaller family groupings. For this game, we use only 3, 4, and 5 fires but historically bighouses came in many sizes with Old Man House at Suquamish being the largest in the Salish Sea Region at 800 feet long with dozens of smaller family groups living inside.

All cards are printed in English and Lushootseed, the language native to the Salish Sea region.

Setting Up: Shuffle the Resource Cards and deal 6 to each player. Put remaining Resource Cards in the middle of the playing area face down as draw stack. Hold your Resource Cards in your hand. Deal one House Card to each player. Unused House Cards will not be needed. Place your House Card face-up in front of you.

Play Area: The play area reflects people who have traveled to a potlatch gathering. The gathering is "outside" their house. Everyone sits around the outer walls in with their family groups that live together in a bighouse. Gifted resources are handed out to everyone who is present. After the potlatch gathering, everyone gathers up their gifts and takes them home to store inside their bighouses. All gifts are distributed and taken home.

Mechanics: Gifting - Players Gift each other by placing Resource Cards from their hands to the area outside other players' House Cards to meet the house's needs. At the end of each round, the gifted Resource Cards are moved into the storage area inside each player's own house.

Obligation - Obligation relates to reciprocity in a shared economy. When someone receives a Gift, they are obligated

to repay the gift in the future, preferably with something of equal or greater value. Obligation is tied to Status and leadership. Sharing valuable Gifts confers favorable Status on individuals, families, and communities. Leaders who share their resources with community members are held in high esteem, or high Status. Community leaders who gain Status are obligated to make sure that all the people in their community have adequate resources to live and thrive.

The *amount* (number in the corner) of the first card played in a round sets the Obligation level for the round. Each subsequent player must meet or exceed the previous *amount* of a gift to maintain or improve the level of obligated reciprocity. For example, if the first player Gifts a Resource Card with a 3, then the second player is obligated to Gift 3 or more on their turn. When the Obligation level exceeds 4, multiple Resource Cards are played to meet the current Obligation level. If multiple Resource Cards are needed to meet the Obligation level, they can be different types of Resources. Each player must Gift with the smallest *amount* that they can to meet the Obligation level. Obligation level resets to 1 at the end of each round.

Combine Resources - If you do not have Resource Card(s) that can be played when it is your turn, then you invite one other player to join in your gifting by Combining Resources. This is a generic invite to share one Resource Card one time, not a request for a specific Resource Card. Inviting a player to Combine Resources does not add or subtract from your Status.

Players who are invited to Combining Resources, must give one of their Resource Cards if they have one that is playable. If they have more than one playable Resource Card, they can choose which one to give. If invited players are able to Combine Resources with you, they get +1 Status. If invited players are NOT able to Combine Resources with you, they get -1 Status.

If the requested player shares a Resource Card with you, then it becomes your Resource Card and you continue with your turn by Gifting any House Card that has unmet needs. If, after adding the shared Resource Card to your hand, you still do not have enough to play on unmet needs at the current Obligation level, then the round ends. If the requested player has no Resource Card to share with you, then the round ends.

Closing Action – A game can end two ways: (1) a player can get all their house needs met, or (2) a player does not have the correct type and/or size of Resource Card to Gift another, even after invoking the Combine Resources action. Place all

Gifted Resource Cards in front of the House Cards into their storage areas. If a player gets all their house needs met, they pass all the Resource Cards in their hand to the player on their left.

If no house has all their needs met, the last player to receive a Gift uses all the Resource Cards in their hand to meet any of their own house needs by placing them in their House Card's storage area. Then they pass all the remaining Resource Cards to the player on their left.

The first player who receives these passed Resource Cards uses them, plus any Resource Cards from their own hand, to meet any of their own house needs by placing them in their House Card's storage area. Once they have used all the Resource Cards that can be played onto their own House Card, they pass all the Resource Cards, including the ones they received from the player on their right, to the player on their left.

Continue passing Resource Cards to the left and using them until all players have had a chance to complete their house needs, including the first player who passed cards to their left.

Status - Status can be tracked using tokens, such as chips or other small items. Or as a written tally on paper. We have designed some Status Cards as a supplement to our game that are available at drivethrucards.com and can be purchased separately or bundled with the deck of game cards.

Players can gain or lose Status by these actions:

+1 for a player who completes another player's house needs in one category at the **exact** amount, not over. It is possible to get more than +1 status by this action in a single turn.

+1 for all players at the end of a game if all players' House Card needs got met.

- 1 for all players at the end of a game if NOT all players' House Card needs were met.

+1 for a player who was invited to Combine Resources and was able to join the Gifting by sharing one of their Resource Cards.

- 1 for a player who was invited to Combine Resources but was unable to join the Gifting by sharing one of their Resource Cards.

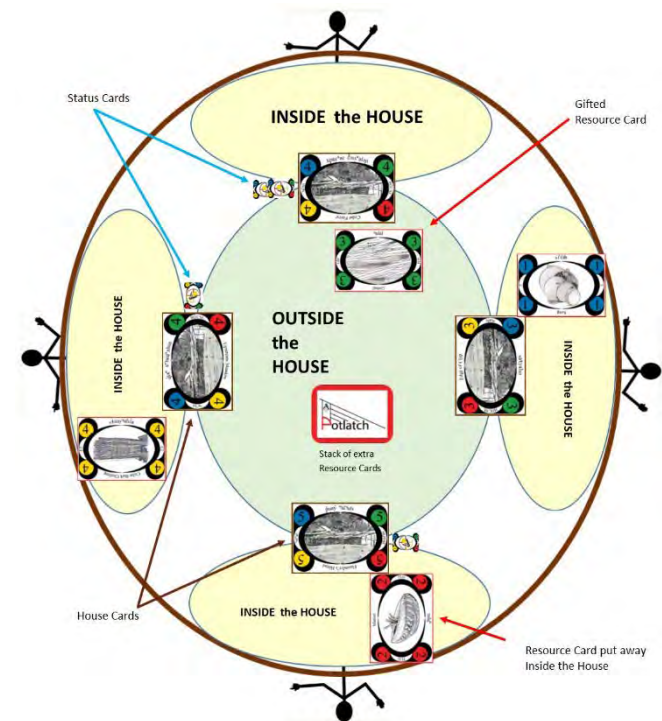
Variations:

1. The number of Resource Cards each player is dealt at the beginning of the game and at the start of each round is the same as the number on their House Card.

2. Use only 4 Resource Cards for each player during the game play. Deal out 4 to start the game and draw to 4 at the beginning of each round.

3. Keep track of Status between games and players with higher status begin each new game as the first gifter.

4. For faster games, only use House Cards with a 3. For longer games only use House Cards with a 4 and 5.



Additional information at www.ndnplayers.com
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